

CHICHESTER DIOCESAN SYNOD MOTION
A Background note from the Bishop of Chichester

'This Synod requests that Canon C22.1 be amended to read that "No person shall be capable of receiving the appointment of archdeacon unless he or she has been six years complete in holy orders at the time of appointment."

1. The purpose of this motion (passed in Chichester Diocesan Synod on 20th November 2010) is simple. It is to delete the words requiring an archdeacon to be a priest, so that deacons as well as priests and bishops may be appointed as archdeacons.
2. The relevant canon (Canon C22) states that :
 1. *No person shall be capable of receiving the appointment of archdeacon until he has been six years complete in holy orders and is in priest's orders at the time of the appointment.*
 2. *Every archdeacon within his archdeaconry exercises the jurisdiction which he has therein as an ordinary jurisdiction.*
 3. *Such jurisdiction is exercised either by the archdeacon in person or by an official or commissary to whom authority in that behalf shall have been formally committed by the archdeacon concerned.*
 4. *Every archdeacon shall within his archdeaconry carry out his duties under the bishop and shall assist the bishop in his pastoral care and office, and particularly he shall see that all such as hold any ecclesiastical office within the same perform their duties with diligence, and shall bring to the bishop's attention what calls for correction or merits praise.*
 5. *Every archdeacon shall within his archdeaconry hold yearly visitations save when inhibited by a superior Ordinary; he shall also survey in person or by deputy all churches, chancels, and churchyards and give direction for the amendment of all defects in the walls, fabric, ornaments, and furniture of the same, and in particular shall exercise the powers conferred on him by the Inspection of Churches Measure 1955; he shall also, on receiving the directions of the bishop, induct any priest who has been instituted to a benefice into possession of the temporalities of the same.*
3. As none of the duties of an archdeacon as specified in the Canon suggest a distinctively priestly dimension to their ministry (cf. the Ordinal) the only case that can be made for excluding deacons from this ministry is the late medieval growth of the so-called *cursum honorum* – a kind of clericalist pyramid of power. In the early Church, as still in many Orthodox churches, deacons occupied a significant role in the administration of the local church as the principal co-workers of the bishop, while presbyters share with their bishop in the oversight of the Church. This is reflected in the fact that to this day in the Church of England archdeacons are the only clergy in a diocese who alongside the diocesan bishop have any ordinary jurisdiction.
4. As there is no good reason why archdeacons should not be in deacon's orders, this is a "tidying-up" measure. It is however an important matter if the threefold ordained ministry affirmed by the formularies of the Church of England is to be reflected in our practice, especially as the number of distinctive deacons, male and female, increases.

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